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Articles in Today's Clips

Thursday, June 12, 2008

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June 12, 2008

Jarvis receives minimum of seven years in Ambien-related child death

Trace Christenson
The Enquirer

Ruthann Jarvis was sentenced today to a minimum of seven years and two months to a maximum of 15 years in prison for her convictions in the Sept. 26 death of 5-month-old Damien Lewis.

The child died in a Springfield day-care center when Jarvis, 49, gave the child an adult dose of Ambien, a sleeping pill.

Jarvis, who had said she gave the child the pill because he was fussy from teething, apologized to the parents of the child, but they told her they could not forgive what she did.

Judge Allen Garbrecht called the incident a “selfish act, a deadly act.”



Porn charges added for ex-bus driver

By ART BUKOWSKI

abukowski@record-eagle.com

Thu, Jun 12 2008

ALBA -- A former school bus driver accused of criminal sexual conduct faces a host of new charges after authorities allegedly discovered child pornography on his computer.

Antrim County authorities charged Kenneth Ray Bigger, 53, of Alba, with five counts of possession of child sexually abusive material and one count of using a computer to commit a crime.

Bigger was charged in May with four counts of fourth-degree criminal sexual conduct with a person between 13 and 16. Antrim sheriff's deputies seized his computer while investigating that complaint and allegedly discovered nearly 1,200 child porn pictures, Prosecutor Charles Koop said.

Bigger, a bus driver for Alba Public School for about eight years, resigned shortly after the initial charges, Superintendent Jeffery DiRosa said. Those charges stem from multiple sexual encounters he allegedly had with a female student in March, Koop said.

Bigger met the girl while working for the school, Koop said, but the alleged incidents happened at Bigger's home.

"It did not occur on school property or during school times," Koop said.

A family member eventually reported the alleged conduct to the sheriff's department. Bigger was arrested and is now free on bond.

Bigger and other district employees underwent a criminal background check in September and had been checked in the past, DiRosa said. Bigger had "no public criminal record," prior to the recent incidents, Koop said.

The district was taken aback by the allegations, DiRosa said.

"It was a shame," he said. "We were shocked and we were sad to hear it. The safety of our students is a number one priority."

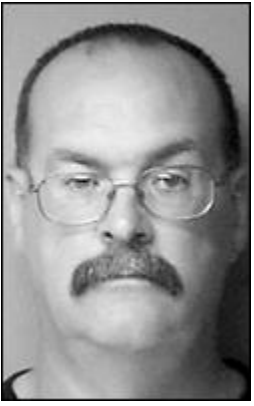
It's disturbing, but not surprising, to see a public employee charged with sex crimes, Koop said.

"Everybody thinks you can pick out a predator, but you can't," he said. "They're (everyday) people in the community ... there's doctors, there's school teachers, there's all sorts of people soliciting or attempting to solicit people under 16."

Bigger waived his preliminary examination on the first set of charges. His case was bound over to circuit court for trial.

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Photos



Bigger



Alleged knife assault results in charges

FROM STAFF REPORTS

Thu, Jun 12 2008

TRAVERSE CITY -- Police arrested a Grayling man after a Garfield Township disturbance.

Grand Traverse sheriff's deputies went to a residence on North Silver Lakeview Court shortly after midnight Tuesday on a report of an assault in progress. Deputies allegedly found several intoxicated individuals.

A group of family and friends were at the residence for a barbecue when a man, 42, allegedly became extremely belligerent, according to a police statement. He allegedly choked his fiancée and charged at his brother with a hobby knife.

The brother was able to tackle the man and get the knife away from him. The man allegedly continued to make threats of violence against his brother in the presence of deputies. They arrested him for aggravated felonious assault.

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Killing of Kaleb Maclin in Flint leaves mother mourning for both her sons, victim and suspect

Posted by Bryn Mickle | The Flint Journal June 11, 2008 21:33PM

FLINT, Michigan — Leatha Maclin can barely bring herself to take even a sip of grape juice.

One son dead. The other in a detention center.

Sobbing in a church office this week, Maclin struggled to even acknowledge that her 16-year-old son could have wielded the knife that killed her other son.

"I can't live without both," said Maclin. "I've lost both my sons."

Maclin's 16-year-old son, Damarcus, is charged with open murder in the weekend slaying of his 21-year-old brother, Kaleb.

The pair were apparently arguing over an iPod and a cellphone Saturday night in the family's Lapeer Road apartment when Damarcus allegedly stabbed Kaleb in the chest with a kitchen knife.

Damarcus' pastor said the teen told him he didn't mean to do it and only wanted to scare his brother with the knife.

"He loved his brother," said Rev. R. Sherman McCathern, who met with Damarcus at the Regional Detention Center on Tuesday. "He has a lot of remorse."

The brothers had only been home a short time after work Saturday night when the argument began, said McCathern.

Their mother, who is partially deaf, was home at the time but didn't realize what happened until she turned around and saw Kaleb bleeding. She has had little to eat or drink since.

Damarcus ran from the apartment but later surrendered to police after calling McCathern shortly after the stabbing to pick him up.

"He kept asking to go to the hospital to see his brother," said McCathern.

A longtime friend of Kaleb Maclin's said the brothers sometimes had a rocky relationship.

"But at the end of the day, they respected each other," said Delmar Harrison, 23, of Flint. "I'm still in disbelief."

Harrison and others who knew Kaleb marveled at his sense of community service and pride in a job well done.

He mowed grass for people at no charge, picked up the city and talked of one day becoming mayor.

His aunt, Sheila Maclin, said Kaleb did something that his mother and her siblings had not done.

"He was the first in the family to graduate high school on time," said Sheila Maclin.

One of Kaleb's teachers at Northern High School said he came into the ninth-grade with a bad attitude, but worked hard to turn his demeanor and his life around.

He was determined to make a bright future for himself. He even dressed the part, wearing a tie to school every day, said teacher Shirley Barnett.

"He was our special student," Barnett said. "He had a way about himself and a good heart."

His family took pride six years ago when Kaleb was chosen to help carry the Olympic torch in Michigan for the 2002 Winter Olympics. He was nominated for the duty through the Bridges of the Future program, family members said.

"He was proud to represent Michigan," said Sheila Maclin. "He wanted to be in Olympics."

Kaleb also looked out for his brother, family members said.

Using money from his job at Sears, Kaleb had recently bought Damarcus a new pair of dress pants to interview at a nearby Taco Bell. He got the job.

Damarcus, a sophomore at Central High School, had problems in school but was turning things around, McCathern said,

The boys' mother said she just wants Damarcus to be sent home.

"He didn't mean it," said Leatha Maclin.

For now, Damarcus is being held in the Regional Detention Center and is charged as an adult with his brother's slaying.

Genesee County Prosecutor David S. Leyton has called the case tragic but said this week that the "grievous" facts led to the decision to charge Damarcus as an adult.

Leyton on Wednesday declined further comment.

But Sheila Maclin believes Damarcus would be better served with his mother.

"He doesn't need a bar over his face. He needs help," said Sheila Maclin.

McCathern hopes the case will lead to a renewed emphasis on stopping youth violence and plans to discuss the matter with Flint Mayor Don Williamson.

"The church just can't continue to bury children. We have to teach them how to live," said McCathern. "Enough is enough."

Funeral services for Maclin are set for noon Saturday at Joy Tabernacle, 731 E. Hamilton Ave., Flint. A viewing will be Friday from 2-6 p.m. at Lawrence E. Moon Funeral Home.

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Lewiston man to stand trial

Thursday, June 12, 2008
Times Staff

MIO - A Lewiston man is competent to stand trial on an open murder charge stemming from his girlfriend's death in February, an Oscoda County judge has ruled.

Richard A. Cunningham, 50, faces an evidence hearing at 1:30 p.m. July 30 in Oscoda District Court. An earlier hearing was delayed so that Cunningham could undergo a psychological evaluation.

This week, evaluation results prompted District Judge Kathryn Root to rule Cunningham mentally competent, court administrators said Wednesday.

Cunningham is charged in the Feb. 24 death of Teresa Lynn Ulanski, 46, also of Lewiston. Police arrested Cunningham shortly after finding Ulanski's body in a house in Oscoda County's Greenwood Township.

The couple had been living together in Montmorency County, police said.



June 12, 2008

Resources squeezed: Rising number of homeless taxing aid agencies

Foreclosures, evictions forcing more desperate people into shelters

Kathleen Lavey
Lansing State Journal

The number of homeless people asking the local Red Cross chapter for emergency shelter this spring has skyrocketed, leaving the charity short of cash.

In May 2007, the Mid-Michigan Chapter of the American Red Cross paid for 105 beds in area motels.

This year, it paid for more than 530 in the same period, said Kathy Faber, programs and services manager at the Red Cross.

It also saw a large boost in April - from 106 beds in 2007 to 447 this year - and has used its entire \$130,000 budget for emergency shelter with nearly four months left in its fiscal year.

"We have people coming in who have gone through foreclosures, who have experienced loss of jobs, a lot of evictions," Faber said. "There are a lot of sad situations, people who have never been in this situation before."

Several other agencies that serve the homeless also report increases in the number of people they're serving, but not to the extent of the Red Cross.

The city of Lansing recorded a slight drop in the number of homeless families served from 2006 to 2007, said Joan Jackson Johnson, director of Lansing's Human Relations and Community Services Department.

She said the city has just contributed \$10,000 to the Red Cross to help it continue the emergency shelter program. The state kicked in \$20,000.

"We are seeing some new folks, but I think we are making a huge dent and placing individuals," she said.

Budget used up

At the SIREN/Eaton Shelter in Charlotte, there has been about a 40 percent increase in people asking for help, director Nancy Oliver said. The shelter, which serves homeless families and domestic violence victims, has 107 beds in several residences and spends about \$30,000 a year on motel rooms. It faced a shortfall in March when its quarterly budget for motel beds was used up.

"The only way you can expand capacity is by using the motel," she said. "You try to save that for your most serious cases, people with a serious medical problem or a newborn baby or a serious domestic violence problem."

She said the shelter often sees an increase in requests for help during the spring and summer. That may be because women are more likely to move their children from an abusive home when they're not in school. And it may be because families who bunk with relatives during the colder months find themselves on their own during the summer.

The Volunteers of America shelter on North Larch Street can serve 50 men and 16 women and children each night, director Patrick Patterson said.

"Anything over that number and we're sleeping people on the floor," he said.

He said both dorms have been over capacity on some nights.

"I've been concerned about this and watching it," he said. "Typically, the Red Cross is the problem solver in the sense that the hotel system is the most flexible way of caring for people."

Addressing the issue

Mark Criss, director of the City Rescue Mission in Lansing, said it serves 35 to 50 women and children in four shelter homes each night.

"We've been at capacity for about three years now," he said. "We had to turn people away, and the Red Cross has had to find funding to put them in a hotel or motel."

However, a \$1.2 million renovation of the former Maplewood School off of South Cedar Street will increase the mission's capacity for women and kids, Criss said. The renovation, scheduled for completion this fall, will include a single women's dorm, a women's drug rehab unit, 18 living units for moms and their kids and a day shelter where they can use phones and computers to seek additional help and resources.

Johnson said the city of Lansing also is partnering with the county, state and local churches to create a program in which individual churches sponsor families.

They'll be placed in homes purchased for \$1 from the federal Housing and Urban Development program.

"We're trying to get some large families who are breaking the bank out of the system and into support," she said. "Safe and affordable is the bottom line."

Grateful for help

Most people who ask the Red Cross for emergency shelter stay in a motel for three to five nights while caseworkers help them look for longer-term solutions, Faber said.

A few, especially those with mental or physical disabilities, stay longer.

Susan Bazel and her daughter, 8-year-old Arin-Kyra, have been living in an East Lansing motel for weeks. A car accident and other health issues have left Bazel, 46, in a wheelchair.

She and Arin-Kyra were evicted from an apartment in Portage, then moved to Holland, Kalamazoo and Highland Park in search of affordable, accessible housing. They ended up back in Lansing this spring.

"This is our first time being homeless," she said. "I don't know what we're supposed to do."

Since she turned to the Red Cross, workers have helped her apply for a subsidized housing voucher. She's waiting for Social Security to make a decision on whether she'll receive disability payments, and hopes that decision will come before the health insurance she carried over from her job runs out in August.

She said she's grateful for the Red Cross help.

"I would not have my daughter living in the streets," she said. "I would have had to put her in a foster home."

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Thursday, June 12, 2008

Editorial

Stemming dropouts will curb youth crime rate

The Detroit News

More Michigan teens are dropping out of school and the work force, says a new study of the condition of the state's children. That explains the report's other key finding: That young people are also more likely to be locked up here than in most other states. Michigan has to keep its children in school and out of jail.

Released today, the Kids Count in Michigan report makes a clear connection between the state's atrocious dropout rate and its teen incarceration rate. The number of "idle teens" -- those not attending school and not working -- grew to 46,000 in 2006 from 42,000 in 2005, according to the U.S. Census American Communities Survey.

With state unemployment rising, "Kids can't get jobs," says Jane Zehnder-Merrell, a senior research associate at Michigan League for Human Services, which collaborated on the report with Michigan's Children and the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

"It's worrying because kids who can't get jobs ... don't build soft skills such as dealing with customers. If teens can't get those skills, then they have a tougher time finding a job in the long run. We're seeing adults losing their jobs, and they're competing for the same jobs as teens are."

The best solution is to make sure teens graduate from high school and are prepared for college.

"We need to be looking for ways to increase access to education training programs for low-income young people who need skills to get into the job market," Zehnder-Merrell says.

United Way of Southeastern Michigan is among the organizations trying to address this need. The foundation this week unveiled a new funding strategy that will target its resources in a few key areas, including combatting the high school dropout problem.

And while it's is a difficult time for the United Way to cut off some of its traditional partner organizations in favor of a more focused funding approach, doing so increases its likelihood of making an impact on the region's chronic problems, including the dropout rate. Michigan's policy makers should take note of the United Way's decision to focus on education as preventative to other social ills.

No problem is more urgent than rescuing teenagers. While Michigan mirrors the rest of country in the rate of minority youth in custody, the rate for white teenagers is *triple* the national average, according to the Kids Count report, suggesting that this is far more than an urban problem.

The rate of all children aged 10 to 15 in custody is 137 per 100,000, compared with a national average of 125.

Keeping those kids locked away costs \$200 to \$300 per youth per day. It's a poor investment: 50 percent to 80 percent of youth released from juvenile correctional facilities are rearrested within two to three years.

Dropouts are more likely to become juvenile offenders, and juvenile criminals are more likely to become adult criminals.

If it doesn't get a handle on its dropout crisis, Michigan's hopes for cutting future prison spending are dim. The best way to keep children out of jail is to keep them in school.

As the state debates its education priorities, a premium should be placed on programs aimed at reducing dropouts.

A strategy that employs family and community-based intervention programs will be far more effective than one that relies so heavily on the criminal justice system.

Locking a child away is a short-term solution. Ultimately, that child will be back in the community, still unprepared to function in a civil society.

An urgent effort is needed that employs both public and private resources to educate children so we don't have to incarcerate them.

Find this article at:

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Report: Michigan child poverty up but teen deaths fall

6/12/2008, 4:00 a.m. ET

By JEFF KAROUB
The Associated Press

DETROIT (AP) — More than a third of Michigan children are living without a full-time working parent, signaling a steep increase in a key measure of child poverty, according to the annual Kids Count report being released Thursday.

But some other measures of child welfare have improved, particularly the rate of teen deaths.

Michigan's rate of children without a parent working full-time and year-round in the home rose about 13 percent between 2000 and 2006, the report says. In all, 35 percent of state children were in such households in 2006, up from 31 percent six years earlier.

The national rate also rose in that period, from 32 percent to 33 percent.

The report from The Annie E. Casey Foundation and the Michigan League for Human Services says Michigan ranked 37th in that category, as well as in infant mortality, which dropped by 4 percent between 2000 and 2005. Both were Michigan's worst rankings.

The state received its best ranking, 13th, for the teen death rate, which showed an 11 percent drop between 2000 and 2005. There were 57 deaths per 100,000 among teens between 15 and 19, compared with 65 deaths nationally.

Jane Zehnder-Merrell, Michigan League's senior research associate, said she sees both good and bad news in the findings, which rank Michigan 27th overall — for the third year in a row.

She said overall child poverty continues to be a problem. Michigan saw the percentage of poor children rise 29 percent from 14 percent in 2000 to 18 percent in 2006. The national rate rose in the same period from 17 percent to 18 percent.

The 2006 poverty threshold for a family of four was \$20,444.

By contrast, the state saw a 20 percent decline in the rate of teen births between 2000 and 2005 and a 40 percent decrease in the percentage of teens who are high school dropouts between 2000 and 2006.

Zehnder-Merrell said the trend, while not particularly positive, suggests that Michigan — widely said to be suffering a "single-state recession" — has company in its economic misery.

She said most states saw a rise in children living in families where no parent works full-time. Ohio matched Michigan's 13 percent jump and several other states had higher increases.

Likewise, she said, seven other states had a bigger increase in child poverty.

"Supposedly, the nation was doing well, but you can see that there was an increase in child poverty nationwide between 2000 and 2006," she said. "We're not alone in this."

Zehnder-Merrell said state and federal programs have helped alleviate some suffering. She said the state recently enacted its version of the federal Earned Income Tax Credit, which she said will give struggling families a little more income.

She also credited the drop in teen deaths — mainly through a decrease in fatal auto accidents — to the implementation of the state's graduated driver's license and an increase in the number of teens wearing seat belts.

This year's report also examines juvenile justice trends, and ranked Michigan 33rd for the rate of youth in

custody for crime. The state detained or committed 137 per 100,000 children between 10 and 15 in 2006, compared with 125 nationally.

Those are the most recent statistics available for that category, said Laura Beavers of the Annie E. Casey Foundation. She said 2003 was the last time a survey was conducted.

"The research shows when you incarcerate kids, essentially, in these critical years, the outcomes are not positive," she said. "Those youth are more likely to return to the system or go into the adult system. We're already struggling with the costs of our correction system — anything we can do to divert kids in a more positive direction, we should absolutely be focused on."

Each year, a Kids Count report compares Michigan with the rest of the nation. In the late fall, a Kids Count in Michigan report shows the county-by-county breakdown of the latest available child well-being statistics.

On the Net:

Michigan League for Human Services: <http://www.milhs.org>

Kids Count report: <http://www.kidscount.org/sld>

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More of state's kids land in poverty, prison, survey finds

BY L.L. BRASIER • FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER • June 12, 2008

More Michigan children are living in poverty, and more of the state's kids are incarcerated for nonviolent crimes than most other states.

That news is part of today's KIDS COUNT report, an annual state-by-state survey of the well-being of children ages 10 to 15 measuring things such as poverty, education, birth rates, death rates and pregnancies. There was good news too, though. Fewer teens are dying, and fewer are having babies than the national average.

Michigan again placed 27th nationwide for its overall treatment of children.

Among the most alarming trends: Michigan continues to incarcerate kids at a much higher rate than the national average and often for nonviolent crimes.

There are 137 children per 100,000 in some sort of state facility or detention in Michigan, compared with the national average of 125 per 100,000. That puts Michigan 33rd in that category.

"This is very expensive, not effective and it's dangerous," said Jane Zehnder-Merrell, a senior research associate with the Michigan League for Human Services and director of the state's KIDS COUNT project. Children housed in detention centers often do not get necessary services, such as mental health care, and end up back in the system.

Michigan's dismal economy is having a dramatic effect on kids as well. About 18% of the state's children are now poor, an increase of 29% in recent years. Poverty is defined as two parents and two children with an annual income of \$20,000. Michigan ranks 30th in that category.

But among the good news, Michigan's teen death rate was 57 deaths per 100,000 among kids aged 15 to 19.

Zehnder-Merrell attributes that to graduated driver's license programs that require teenagers to drive under supervision for several months before obtaining their license, and an increase in the use of seat belts.

"It's a combination of factors. Certainly there has been an emphasis on safe sex, and there are also a lot of local efforts to help young people make better decisions, so some are delaying becoming sexually active."

Zehnder-Merrell said that despite those improvements, the overall numbers should alarm all Michigan citizens.

"These kids are the workers, the next generation, and if we don't give them opportunities, they won't be functional adults," she said.

Contact **L.L. BRASIER** at 248-858-2262 or brasier@freepress.com.

IN OUR OPINION

Don't let a bad economy doom children to poverty

June 12, 2008

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The most depressing trend out of the annual Kids Count report being released today is the continued rise in poverty rates among children in Michigan. This is not news, and it reflects a nationwide pattern, but the difference here is acute.

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In 2000, 14% of Michigan's children lived in poverty. In 2006, 18% did. To be counted as impoverished, a family of four could have no more than \$20,444 in income.

Equally depressing is the growth in families where no parent has a full-time job, up from 31% to 35% -- a change that in effect took Michigan from slightly below the national average to above it. That puts Michigan 37th among the states, and it's a ranking that perhaps not coincidentally matches how poorly the state stands in infant mortality when compared to the rest of the nation.

The annual release of national data from Kids Count is one of the most comprehensive opportunities Michigan has to benchmark itself against other states in how its children are faring. Teens, amazingly, have continued to show gains in many statistics. That includes a continuing drop in death from accidents, most often attributed to the sensibly tightened standards for driver's licenses. But statewide, the teenage dropout rate also has declined, as has the teenage birth rate. Michigan ranks gratifyingly well above the national average in these measures.

But in a sad statistic that matches Michigan's high imprisonment rate for adults, Michigan locks up more of its pre-teens and teenagers than the nation as a whole -- even though the arrest rate for violent crimes is lower than the national average. Kids Count shows that for every 100,000 children ages 10-15, Michigan has 137 in custody, compared to 125 nationwide.

The continuing economic problems here bode even more poorly for today's children. They are tomorrow's teenagers, and quickly thereafter Michigan's next work force. It is not just compassionate but in every Michigander's self-interest to ensure that children in impoverished families have the food, health care and education that give them a chance to grow into strong and capable adults.

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Teens help out in metro Detroit's tough economy

More volunteer labor for summer

BY PEGGY WALSH-SARNECKI • FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER • JUNE 12, 2008

Ryan Harlan started volunteering at Beaumont Hospital in Troy three years ago because he thought he needed to perform community service to graduate from Rochester High School. But he kept helping with clerical work there, even after he realized it was not a requirement.

"I didn't mind it, and I definitely enjoyed the people there. I realized it was helping people out," said Harlan, 18, of Rochester Hills.

In a down economy, hospitals and other agencies in metro Detroit need teen and young adult volunteers more than ever -- and the tough summer job market is one reason they are increasingly answering the call.

"I think it's a wonderful thing. It gives kids exposure to different career paths," said Beth Frydlewicz, volunteer director at Beaumont Hospital in Troy, which will have approximately 500 student volunteers this summer.

"For many of them, it's their first time out in the real world, and it gives them some exposure to other cultures and the protocol of a corporation, the culture and dress codes that are so important."

Harlan said he intends to keep volunteering at Beaumont this summer, even though he graduated this month and will go to Oakland University in the fall.

The volunteer rate among metro Detroiters ages 16 to 24 is 29.6%, 31st among the 50 largest metropolitan areas in the nation and slightly above the national average of 23.4%, according to the Corporation for Community Service, a federal agency that helps connect individuals with volunteer opportunities.

The national numbers are more than double what they were in 1989, and though the agency does not have local data from then, it said the growth in metro Detroit likely was similar.

Finding ways to help

Agencies often put limits on teen volunteers. For example, most hospitals do not allow teens to work with patients, and the Michigan Humane Society keeps younger teens from working alone with animals. But there are many other jobs, from pulling weeds to delivering hospital gifts, that teens can do.

"We need more and more volunteers to get engaged in their own community and their own schools," said Angela Walker, manager of volunteer services for the United Way of Southeast Michigan, which has more than 1,000 teen and young adult volunteers.

"Volunteers can really give back to the community when things are being cut."

Pam Bhullar, 17, of Canton has been volunteering for hospitals since eighth grade, helping in health education programs for children and teens. A recent Plymouth High School grad, she plans to continue volunteering this summer before entering Duke University in the fall.

"We're so busy, caught up in what we want to do, we seem to be taking more than we're giving," she said. "For me, volunteering just made me feel like I was doing something worthwhile and every time I made a patient smile, I could tell I made a difference in their life."

Agencies such as the Michigan Humane Society realize the value of volunteers.

"We have a lot of college kids who come in the summer, and yes, we could use the help," said spokeswoman Jan Cattle. "We're expanding our program to use more younger kids."

Rachel Forche, 14, who will be a sophomore at Troy High School in the fall, helped organize her Girl Scout troop to make kitty forts for the Humane Society.

"A lot of the girls in our troop were very interested in animals," she said. "We went to the Humane Society and there were limited things we could do, because of our ages. We found this project."

She's now planning another volunteer project this summer, involving health and fitness for younger children.

"You'll remember volunteering your whole life, but you won't remember going to the mall with friends," she said. "And it's great in the way you helped someone."

Her mother, Jennifer Forche, said kids tend to be underestimated.

"If we make the opportunities available, teenagers can be very productive and can be tremendous volunteers in our community," she said.

Volunteering its own reward

Carla Miller, student coordinator for Beaumont Hospital in Troy, is so enthusiastic about teen volunteers, she can tell numerous stories about her young helpers. There was the young woman who grinned from ear to ear every time she got to help a patient, she said, and the young man who could barely speak English, but volunteered more than 340 hours in 10 months, helping with patient and family comfort in the surgery areas. He then called to thank the project chairman for allowing him to do it.

"I think that we are shortchanging the nation when we do not utilize our high school students in this type of capacity, when we don't offer them the opportunity to not only give back to the community but explore future career options," Miller said.

"I just think of it as fun," said Mayur Patel, 17, of Canton, who just graduated from Salem High School in Canton and will attend the University of Michigan this fall. He volunteers for several organizations, including his church, hospitals and school clubs.

"You get to meet new people and each one is different," he said.

"One told me about World War II, and another told me he was a professional boxer in Spain. I think it's kind of fun to do that."



Mid-Michigan officials discover new cases of HIV

Posted by Jill Armentrout | The Saginaw News June 12, 2008 07:22AM

Mid-Michigan public health officials are promoting testing for HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, as part of a national campaign and in reaction to a cluster of positive diagnoses during the past two months.

Bay County Health Department staff recorded two new cases of HIV in a recent outbreak, along with one for Midland County and one for Isabella County, health officials said. Cases are recorded based on an individual's residency.

"Our investigation shows these cases are related to each other and coming from high-risk behaviors," said Joel Strasz, public health services manager for Bay County.

Risk factors include having unprotected sex with multiple partners and sharing needles for intravenous drug use, as well as having another sexually-transmitted disease.

Friday, June 27, is National HIV Testing Day, and health agencies are providing free testing during the week of Monday through Friday, June 23-27. HIV stands for human immunodeficiency virus; AIDS, for acquired immunodeficiency syndrome.

Bay, Midland and Isabella counties historically record low rates of HIV infection, so a few cases at once indicates a "significant increase in the rate," Strasz said.

Midland County recorded two positive tests in the 2007 fiscal year, while Bay County had four, said Lorrie Youngs, health education supervisor for the Central Michigan District Health Department based in Mount Pleasant. She oversees case management services for individuals infected with HIV across 62 counties. Her records show 13 new positive tests in 2007 in the Central Michigan District, which covers six counties including Isabella.

Rates are generally higher in Saginaw County, said Linda Dann, HIV/STD program supervisor at the Saginaw County Health Department. So far in 2008, Saginaw County health officials have recorded six new cases of HIV. There were 21 new cases found in 2007 in the county, Dann said. The department tested 430 people in 2007 and has tested 139 so far this year.

The Michigan Department of Community Health estimates prevalence rates of residents living with HIV infection in individual counties. The most recent date from 2006 estimates:

The state estimates 18,000 people are living with the disease or infection in Michigan, and 3,300 of them haven't been tested and aren't aware of their status, officials reported in the quarterly HIV/AIDS analysis issued in January. There are an estimated 1 million Americans living with HIV/AIDS.

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